

# GO riders angry over fare hike

By **Tim Foran**  
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A Milton commuter's on-line petition for GO Transit to retract both the fare hike it enacted this past weekend and one last year could set up an interesting political showdown in the Ontario legislature Monday.

Andrew Salmons, who quit taking the GO train to his work in Toronto last June due to poor performance and rising fares, started the petition last Friday after GO's board of directors passed its 2009-10 operating budget, which included a 25-cent fare hike for adult riders and a smaller one for seniors and children.

As of Thursday morning, the petition had received almost 1,700 signatures, many with angry comments regarding the Provincially-funded agency's decision to raise fares in a recession.

"It's wrong," said Salmons. "People have unreliable service from GO. It's costing us more when driving is costing less and less."

Salmons forwarded his concerns to Halton Conservative MPP Ted Chudleigh, who said he supports the petition and plans to bring it up in the Legislature.

Chudleigh said he might read a statement expressing concern on the issue or ask Transportation Minister (MTO) Jim Bradley an oral question during Question Period.

However, bringing up the issue in Question Period could backfire for the Tory MPP, who has been front-and-centre in the Legislature in recent weeks attacking the government's spending priorities and handling of the economy. It's an almost certainty Bradley would be ready with a handful of statistics showing what the current Liberal government has spent on GO Transit expansion and operations compared to the handling of the transit body under the previous Tory government, when former Premier Mike Harris downloaded funding responsibility for GO to the municipalities for a few years.

A spokesperson for the MTO said the Province is spending \$805.7 million on GO for 2008-09, compared to \$35.1 million in 1998-99.

For its part, GO said it was taking Salmons' petition "very seriously."

"GO recognizes these are challenging times economically," said GO spokesperson Vanessa Thomas. "(But) GO also recognizes the fare increase is necessary in order to provide the best possible service and continue to expand to meet the needs of our riders."

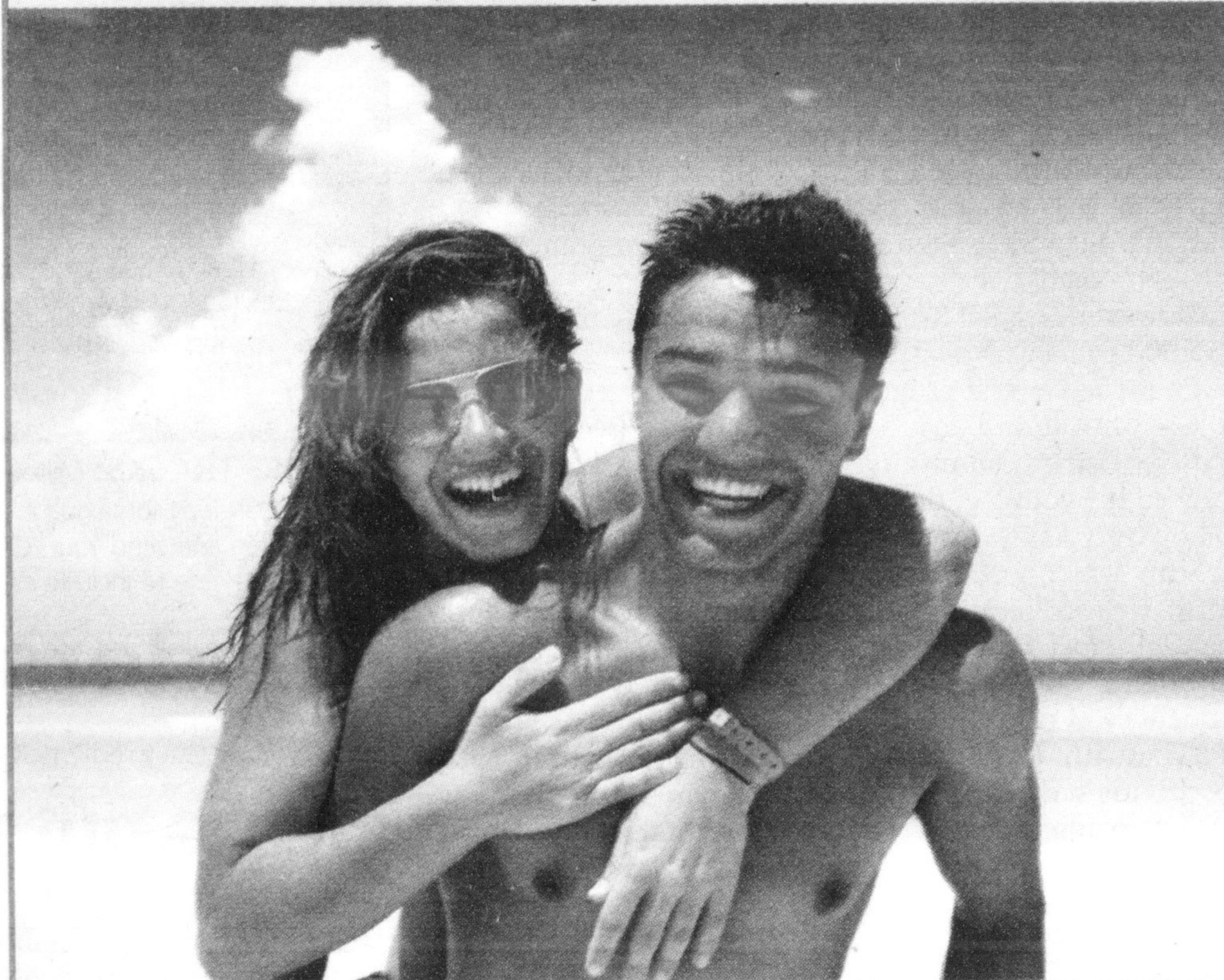
The system's on-time performance averaged 88 per cent in the last quarter of 2008 though its December performance stood at 84 per cent, a two per cent drop from the same month in 2007. Thomas attributed the drop to the snowstorms before Christmas. The agency now posts average on time performance for each individual train at its website [www.gotransit.com](http://www.gotransit.com), by clicking on Schedules.

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